

G3 GAMING, GIZMOS & GADGETS

a weekly report on computer, electronic and video games

Listen-up! This is the best

I've tested a number of Bluetooth wireless cell phone headsets in recent months, and the one from Gennum Corporation, a Canadian company, is the best.

It's called nXZEN, and the headset is available at Future Shop, Best Buy and online at eCost.com for \$175.

The nXZEN is the only headset on the market to use two microphones. While two microphones won't mean much to you as the user, it will make a huge difference to anyone you're calling. The idea, according to the folks at Gennum, is that the two microphones allow "the chips to register the time and distance between sounds and amplify the speaker's voice while eliminating background and ambient noise."



Murray Hill
The StarPhoenix

It works. I've made a bunch of calls from outside, where wind noise usually causes problems for people I'm calling. Everyone has said how well they can hear me. It also worked from the car with the window open and the radio on — clearly better than any other set I've tested.

The nXZEN doesn't have an earbud like most of the other headsets, rather it has an earbud that goes into your ear like a good quality earphone does. This makes a huge difference for the wearer. You can hear a lot better because a lot of the extraneous outside noise is filtered out. The earbud takes a bit of getting used to because it's pretty large.

One of the smallest Bluetooth headsets on the market, it is one by 3.3 inches and weighs just 17 grams; you can hardly tell you're wearing it. The headset has a digital signal processor that can perform 120 million instructions per second. The closest competitor comes in at about 32 million. This power produces up to four times more noise reduction than anyone else's headset. The nXZEN offers seven hours of talk time and 100 hours of

standby time considerably more than any other headset I've tested.

The nXZEN comes in two flavours. I tested the basic \$179 model. The nXZEN PLUS is \$199, and comes with a connector and an external earbud so users can hook up to their MP3 players and use their Bluetooth headset to listen to music. Answering an incoming phone call is as simple as hitting a button.

Bluetooth technology is making cell phone use a lot safer as more and more consumers decide headsets are a much safer way to go than trying to use a cell phone in the car. Because Bluetooth offers very good quality reception over a short distance and no wires to get tangled up in, it's fast becoming the preferred technology for cell users.

PROS: Bluetooth! NO WIRES! Great sound, small size, easy setup and people at the other end can actually hear you when you're outside.

CONS: The earbud takes some getting used to because it really sticks into your ear. At \$179 MSRP for the nXZEN it's fairly expensive.



nXZEN
from Gennum Corporation

You can e-mail Hill at: mhill@sp.canwest.com, and find past columns on the web at: <http://www.canada.com/topics/technology/columnists/hill.html>